
HALDIMAND COUNTY

Memorandum EMS-M01-2025 Response Time Performance Plan Results 2024 For Consideration by Council in Committee on February 25, 2025



To: Mayor Bentley and Members of Council
From: Jason Gallagher, Manager of Emergency Services/Fire Chief

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT Memorandum EMS-M01-2025 Response Time Performance Plan Results 2024 be received.

Each year, every Ambulance Service Provider in the Province sets response time standards in regards to how long it takes an ambulance to arrive to specific types of calls based on priority and acuity. Two of the six targets are set by the Province which include Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA) and Canadian Triage Acuity Scale (CTAS), CTAS 1. Haldimand County is responsible for setting the targets on the remaining, being CTAS 2, CTAS 3, CTAS 4, and CTAS 5. The specifics of these are defined in detail within the memo.

In September 2023, Council in Committee received the 2024 Ambulance Response Time Performance Plan, which established the ambulance response time targets for the 2024 calendar year. In accordance with the ambulance response time reporting legislation, these response time targets were submitted to the Ministry of Health (MOH) and made publicly accessible on their website.

The purpose of this memo is to inform Council of the 2024 ambulance response time performance plan results, which is measured against the response time targets. In 2024, staff were able to meet the performance plan in 5 out of the 6 areas. The only exception was Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA), which is set by the Ministry of Health (MOH). These targets are examined in more detail below. It is important to know that these results include response times for the entire year. This is a decline from 2023 where Haldimand County Paramedics Services was able to meet all six response time standards, including those set by the MOH and the municipality. This is a result of multiple factors, which will be referenced within the memorandum, however, it does not represent a any significant decline in the performance of the team.

Sudden Cardiac Arrest

The Sudden Cardiac Arrest target defines the time/percentage it takes for a defibrillator to be beside a vital sign absent patient. The approved target for Haldimand is a defibrillator will be beside a cardiac arrest patient within 6 minutes of placing the 911 call, 40% of the time. Haldimand County Paramedic Services performed below the set target at 31.25% in 2024. There are a number factors that could affect this standard. Firstly, this target encompasses all defibrillators, including any public access and/or fire department, although these factors help to meet the standard, occasionally the ambulance beats the fire department and public access defibrillators are not available at all facilities which are privately owned, for example grocery stores, convenience stores, etc., which is why this benchmark can be missed periodically. More specifically, if the 911 call is in our rural area, the response time for the ambulance or fire department will be greater, which will affect this target and result in it being skewed. To put things in relative terms, Haldimand County Paramedic Services did not meet this benchmark by

3 calls over the course of the year, which is what has informed the result being under 40%. Of note, those 3 calls were rural which added length to the response given the locations.

Canadian Triage Acuity Scale (CTAS)

Under the CTAS scale, (CTAS 1 – 5), Haldimand met all the targets set by the Ministry of Health (MOH) & Council. This is referenced in Attachment 1. Haldimand County Paramedic Services 2024 Response Time Performance Standards are consistent in comparison to last year, where we were able to meet all CTAS 1 – 5 targets.

Impacts to Response

The 2024 Ambulance Response Time Performance Plan Results are presented as Attachment 1 to this memo. Also, staff have included Haldimand County's Response Time Performance Plan Results for the past 5 years as Attachment 2 to this memo. Determining the CTAS level is completed by measuring the acuity of a patient by using the scale system within the CTAS. The system categorizes patients by both injury and physiological findings, and ranks them by severity from 1–5 (1 being highest).

In regards to severity, Sudden Cardiac Arrest, (SCA) and CTAS 1 are the highest priority. Haldimand County Paramedic Services did not meet all response time standards for 2024, specifically in SCA and this can be attributed to multiple challenges in achieving these numbers. These challenges can be attributed to increased call volume, extended travel times, limitations in the availability of County ambulances, delays following communicable disease response/unavailability of resources (i.e., ambulances, paramedics or equipment being out of service for disinfection).

Other delays that contribute to availability of ambulances are off-load delays, which has become an issue in the Province of Ontario, due to the decrease in hospital staffing and increase of patients visiting the emergency rooms. In 2024, Haldimand County experienced a total 1,906.20 hours of off-load time at both local hospitals combined. This means, Haldimand County ambulances were unable to respond within the municipality for that amount of time as resources were tied up in local ER's waiting for available beds. In the past, Haldimand County Paramedic Services would average approximately 30 minutes off-load delay, where now we are seeing off-load delays that average 2.5 hours locally. This increase also used to be the norm when transporting patients to out of County hospitals, but as per improvements to Haldimand County's Paramedic Services Deployment Plan, a receiving out of town hospital must have an off-load plan of one-half hour (30 minutes) in place, prior to transport of the patient, otherwise the transfer will not occur. This decreases off-load delays in out-of-town destinations, and returns ambulances quicker to the County.

Also, the increase in the seniors' demographic and population level as a whole both contribute to response challenges. Other assignments and necessitating coverage from outside agencies and availability for ambulances is an increasing concern for Haldimand County as well.

The statistics fluctuate from year-to-year, due to call volume, transport times, and delay in available ambulances, which can affect the Performance Plan numbers. It is also important to know that the data being generated is provided by the Province, discrepancies in reporting data is an ongoing issue, and service providers find that some data is lagging months behind. The numbers provided in this memo are the most current and are subject to change.

Ambulances in Ontario work on a seamless system when it comes to dispatching and responding to calls. There are times when Haldimand County has zero ambulances available and neighboring municipalities provide coverage. This occurred 58 times in 2024, 16 of them occurring at night. Code Zero occurrences have decreased since the upstaff in June of 2022. Code Zero events will increase response times, as crews have to respond from greater distances. In 2024, Haldimand County Paramedic staff continue to notice a moderate call volume increase. In 2024, Haldimand County

Paramedic Services experienced a 6% or 866 call volume increase from 2023, (14,349 calls – 15,215 calls) and the availability of ambulances is becoming an issue as multiple calls are being dispatched simultaneously, and therefore, affects the ability to respond.

In 2024, neighboring municipalities completed 449 emergency calls in Haldimand County as Haldimand County resources were not available, up by 79 calls from 2023. In comparison, Haldimand County Paramedic Services responded 754 times into other territories or municipalities for emergency calls, which is increasing due to provincial call volume increasing, and is affecting all municipalities. Another challenge is ambulances are still being utilized for transfer services into the urban centres to get patients to specialized health care. This depletes resources and increases response times.

In 2022, staff initiated the Sit-to-Fit Program in our two local hospitals. This program allows paramedics to off-load patients with minor injuries or ailments into the waiting room, allowing paramedics to resume in-service status faster, rather than being placed on an off-load delay in the Emergency Room, which keeps paramedics out-of-service and unable to respond. This program is working well, and has assisted in availability of paramedics.

Data is showing that call volumes continue to increase, which is affecting response times as well as resources available to provide adequate service to the residents and visitors of Haldimand County. That being said, staff continuously monitor call volumes and response times to determine when the County may have to add resources. Staff also use this data to ensure they are providing the most effective deployment plan, which is updated annually.

The 2024, ambulance response time performance is presented as Attachment 1 to this memo. This information will be submitted to the MOH and will be made publicly accessible on their website. Also, staff have included Haldimand County's Response Time Performance Plan Results for the past 5 years as Attachment 2 to this memo.

REFERENCES:

None.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. 2024 Response Times.
2. Provincial Response Times .